



GEN, a Grassroots Empowerment Network working with local NGOs and the most disadvantaged villagers to contribute to the elimination of poverty in the Alwar District of Rajasthan State, India. To find out more about the GEN's work see www.gen-initiative.org

'While poverty persists, there is no freedom'
Nelson Mandela 2006

GEN News – June / July 2012

GEN and End Poverty Stakeholder Meet in Tijara, March / April 2012

Consultation, collaboration, cross cultural cooperation and sharing are at the heart of GENs work with End Poverty in the Tijara villages of Rajasthan. Our annual stakeholder meet reflects these principles



Key End Poverty (EP) field workers (L to R) , Puran (Education coordinator), Dayal Singh (Craft work coordinator) and Subhash (Village development group coordinator) were part of the local team at the opening meeting to review EPs and GENs progress in the Tijara villages in 2011-12. The day long meeting took place under an awning seated in Dayal Singh's compound in Mithiyabaas village. We marked reported successes with a rousing traditional drum beat!

The meeting opened with craft work coordinators, Santosh and Krishna offering a chant of commitment to a successful outcome for the meeting.

Also at the meeting were EP Chair, Vinod Kausik, EP CEO, Rachna Singh, EP Education Adviser, Deepti Bhardwaj, and GEN representatives, Sue Burke (Chair), Eric Arnold (Associate) and Michael Anderson (Finance Adviser). Among other things we discussed reports of progress in the girls literacy project, including the successful launch of a second level pilot class for girls (KSEP) who had requested more opportunities for further learning, including English and computer.



Ceremonial chanting Santosh & Krishna launch the event



Afeena teaches the KSEP

We also heard that the pilot adult literacy class in Ramlal ki Dhani had been successfully completed by 25 men, but that there was a continuing demand for classes in two other villages, as well as one exclusively for women. We also agreed that we need to do more to provide financial literacy as part of this.

Progress in the new craftwork project was reported, including demonstrations of new bags produced by the women artisans (see below). In future there will be three craft work production centres based in three villages in the Tijara Block.

Other reports came from village development groups and from Dayal Singh on his experiences with providing village based accommodation to foreign visitors and his ideas on developing village based tourism.

Open Meeting at EPs office in Bhiwadi

The second day of the GEN / EP stakeholder meet included attendees from all the village development groups and villages where we work plus invited guests, including Moin Khan, representative of the local MLA (MP), Gyatri from one of our funders, iPartner India, two craft work interns from Germany and Italy, and Mukesh Gupta, head of a small finance company who is interested in EPs work.



Village team from Bhalesar



Whole group at work



Feedback session

A key set of outcomes was identification by village groups of issues they want to tackle in their villages, with EP support, most notably: install overhead water tanks; improve village sanitation; repair drainage systems and pavements; better public transport; and increase access to pensions by those eligible. It was also agreed to hold more village level consultations on the possibilities for rural tourism.

It was reported that there is still an unmet demand for girls literacy in several Tijara villages. More advanced educational opportunities for girls is also needed, especially for those who demonstrate particular talents. More books and games would improve current provision. More adult classes were also requested.

The livelihood project based on craftwork production was examined at a more practical level, and steps agreed for streamlining the current arrangements. Getting the right staffing to develop the project was identified as a priority.

GEN gave everyone at the meeting a sample pouch produced through the project as a memento and a ‘magic bag’ for collecting ideas and symbols emerging from the meeting. Others added symbolic items like seeds, pens, notebooks, chocolate, etc

Moin Khan, representative of the local MLA admired the craftwork products (see right). He was surprised that such attractive items were being produced on ‘his patch’.



Moin Khan (L) examines a quilt at the Meet

GENs Michael Anderson, on a first visit to meet EP and see the projects supported by GEN said that this was ‘a remarkable week-end beyond anything I have experienced before’. He also sat in on one of the girls classes.

Girls from three ‘new’ villages experience EPs basic literacy classes



Since January 100 more teenage girls have joined EPs 6 month literacy and numeracy classes where they acquire knowledge and skills in the creative arts, health and nutrition, basic horticulture and sewing as well as reading and writing in Hindi and basic numeracy. Their class room is a mat on the floor outside their teachers home. They do games and exercise as part of the class. *EP needs more board games and sports equipment for these classes.*

End Poverty's craft work project for livelihood improvement makes progress



Krishnan presents attractive new bag at the stakeholder meet



Katharina and Laura, interns with EP from Germany and Italy show the sales catalogue they have compiled of products from the Tijara Handicrafts project. This is to give to retailers who might be interested in taking items



A selection of quilts produced in the project so far



Santosh with latest shopping bag from the project

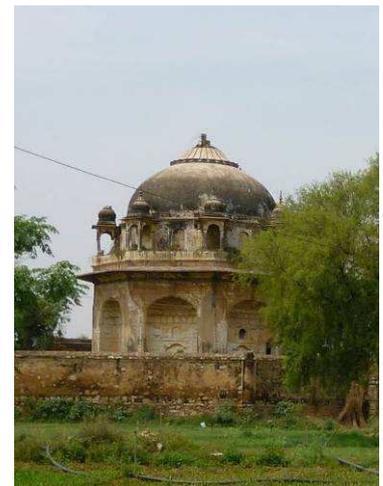


Rural Tourism for livelihood support and generating income

Work on developing a rural tourism project continues, building on the feasibility study report which was prepared for GEN and EP in October 2011 by the International Centre for Responsible Tourism at Leeds Metropolitan University.

Three main themes have been identified for development: (i) culinary tourism; (ii) craft-focused tourism; and (iii) environmental tourism (natural history and trekking). There may also be scope for adding a fourth, based on architecture, history and culture. One of the major historical assets of the area is an impressive building from the Mughal period (see photo) which may have been used to accommodate soldiers.

The next steps include: (a) assessing the case for school trips. Rachna Singh will bring a school group as a pilot study; (b) more work on homestays, led by Dayal Singh, who has now accommodated several groups in the guest room which he built within his compound; and (c) a possible stocktake of environmental assets. (d) exposure visits to rural tourism projects elsewhere



Old Mughal building near village Dholi Pahadi, one of the bigger villages in Tijara

Why not add a village visit or home stay on your next trip to India for a unique experience of life in Tijara? GEN and End Poverty can arrange this for a moderate fee to go towards EPs work in the area. You can go for a day from Delhi or Gurgaon or stay overnight in a nearby hotel or even with one of the villagers. EPs local team will show you round. Your visit could cover an overview of the locality, a girls literacy class, a handicrafts centre, meeting villagers, eating with a local family. *Details from Sue* SPBurke@aol.com

Walkers with 'Spring' in their steps keep fit and raise funds for the GEN



In March twenty two walkers and Max the dog (who also paid his way), hiked a circular route from Marlowe on the bank of the Thames, westwards up into the Chiltern hills and then down again to a good lunch at the Dog and Badger – all in support of the GEN. We then 'marched' back along the Thames from Medmenham to Marlow for tea – about 14 km. It was a fine route and the walk raised over £400. Thanks to all.

The next walk, also circular, goes from the ancient village of Ewelme near Wallingford also near the Thames, to Nuffield and back. **In September** we are planning a city walk round the Royal Parks half marathon route, London, led by Tony Charlwood, GEN trustee, and regular walker who has a place in the half marathon, said to be one of the most beautiful city runs in the world! He will run for the GEN. We will support him! You can do the same by contacting him on tony_charlwood@hotmail.com

Looking for something interesting and worthwhile to get stuck into?

GEN needs more helping hands. We have no paid staff, so volunteers are vital for our operational effectiveness. Possibilities include:

- helping us to organise fund raising events like the Diwali Party or our 10 for GEN walks;
- offering to adopt GEN for a sponsored activity you are thinking of doing, and just need a nudge to do it!
- helping GEN with UK marketing of the handicrafts produced by Tijara women - liaising with a local outlet in your area, persuading it to take some of the products, and managing the relationship
- a donation to support a specific piece of work – e.g. * piloting an adult literacy class for women, *exposure visits such as one to enable a small team of 'prime movers' to visit successful rural tourism projects elsewhere, * providing sets of books, games and sports kit for the girls classes, * adopting a staff post at EP for one of the activities we are working to develop (handicrafts, rural tourism, village development group support), * enabling village development groups to tackle some of the problems they identified at the stakeholder meet (see page 2),
- becoming a sponsor for all or part of the Diwali party (with associated publicity this would offer) – see next item, or helping us to find sponsors
- becoming a GEN trustee or associate if you have an interest in governance or in the practicalities of grass roots development in rural India.
- if you have useful skills and expertise there might be opportunities to contribute at the village level in Tijara through End Poverty, for instance by teaching English on the girls literacy project, advising on health issues in the villages, playing a part in developing the craft work project, or in progressing the rural tourism challenge.

We have already had 6 interns working with EP, including village based stays, and would like to have more. But we don't have funds to cover their costs. yone interested has to cover their own costs. To date interns have reported having 'a brilliant experience' in an area where traditional hospitality is part of the culture

Party time! Join us to celebrate Diwali, GEN style.....Saturday 17th November 2012



Fire lanterns for Diwali? Plus laser show and indoor fireworks

On Saturday 17th November GEN will hold its annual fund raising Diwali Party in the excellent Memorial Hall in the pretty village of Whittlesford just 10 minutes south of Cambridge off the M11. It is a new venue, with a new caterer, and new entertainment including a laser lighting display, indoor fireworks, and we also hope some sky lanterns to float across the night sky above the Hall and village. Put it in your diary now!!!

GEN News is compiled and edited by Sue Burke, Chair of the GEN. SPBurke@aol.com 020 7794 9495

GEN Initiative: Charity Reg. No. 1101193 Charitable Co. Ltd. by Guarantee Reg. No. 4620446, Regd. Office Radbourne Management Service, Radbourne House, Butchers Lan, Pattishall, Northants e mail colinp.marsh@btinternet.com